Division of Ethnology
U.S. National Museum

MISSION INDIANS

OF

CALIFORNIA.

REPORT

OF

WILLIAM VANDEVER,

UNITED STATES INDIAN INSPECTOR.

MISSION INDIANS

OF

CALIFORNIA.

REPORT

OF

WILLIAM VANDEVER,

UNITED STATES INDIAN INSPECTOR.

REPORT OF WILLIAM VANDEVER, UNITED STATES INDIAN INSPECTOR.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., *January* 6, 1876.

SIR: Pursuant to instructions from your Office of November 3, 1875, I have visited most of the localities in Southern California where bands of Mission Indians are to be found. I have also visited and inspected various tracts of land that have been offered by their owners for the use of these Indians.

For the purpose of more convenient communication with you, and to enable me to acquire such information as the files of the surveyor-general's office afford, I have returned here.

Propositions from the owners of land for lease or sale to the United States for the use of the Indians, I will transmit in due time with recommendations. In the prosecution of my duties here I have availed myself of the advice and services of Special Agent D. A. Dryden. I am now awaiting his return from a trip to one point that I could not conveniently reach myself.

I respectfully call your attention to the recommendation contained in my communication of December 31, 1875, in relation to the employment of M. C. Wheeler, of San Diego, Cal., to define and mark the boundaries of such tracts of surveyed or unsurveyed public lands as are now occupied by the Indians, or that it may be found expedient to reserve for their use.

I had hoped that enough public land could be found in Southern California suitable for the location of all the Indians, but I am now satisfied that only a part can be so accommodated; there seems to be no alternative but to lease or purchase a tract from private parties, upon which to locate most of the Mission Indians.

The location selected for these Indians should be of such dimensions that bands known to be unfriendly toward each other can be kept separate; harmony will thus be secured.

Land once secured for these Indians, I see no reason to doubt that they will be able to support themselves.

As they are now situated, they have no homes and but little incentive to work. They have been driven from place to place, where they claimed the right to stay, until hope has expired within them, and they have at last fallen into a kind of despairing vagabondage. They pray only for a little spot of earth they can call home, out of all the rich domain that was once all their own.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM VANDEVER,
United States Indian Inspector.

HON. COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *January* 31, 1876.

SIR: My instructions of November 3, 1875, required me to secure a lease of a tract of land in Southern California, with the privilege of purchase, for the use of the Mission Indians.

Upon the receipt of these instructions I repaired to San Diego and commenced examinations. I first visited the San Ysabel ranch, situated about sixty miles northeast of San Diego. Here I found several hundred Indians living in dread of removal by the owners of the ranch. A station was established at San Ysabel, and a church built by the early Spanish missionaries, as a branch or outpost of the old mission of San Diego, and it remains to this day a favorite resort of the Indians.

San Ysabel includes upward of 17,000 acres of land within its boundaries. It is an elevated basin surrounded by mountains. Water is abundant; the finest pasturage is found upon the slope of the mountains, and the valleys are fertile; good crops are raised without irrigation, and there is plenty of timber. Large bodies of public land remain undisposed of in the neighborhood of San Ysabel, which, if added to it, would render it capable of sustaining nearly all the Indians in Southern California.

The owners of this ranch are B. M. Hartshorn, of San Francisco, and A. H. Wilcox, of San Diego. Their title is derived from a Spanish or Mexican grant, confirmed under the laws of the United States. They offer to lease the premises to the United States for five years at an annual rental of $5,000, current money, giving the Government the option of purchase within three years, upon the payment of $100,000 gold coin or its equivalent, in full consideration of the land.

The Warner, or San José Valle ranch, containing ten leagues, or about 44,000 acres of land, is offered for sale to the United States, by the Hon. John G. Downey, of Los Angeles, for the sum of $225,000, or at a rental of 7 per cent. on that amount, ($15,750.) This tract of land, situated near San Ysabel, in the northern part of San Diego County, contains much good pasturage, and abounds in springs of water and groves of timber. It is at a much lower elevation than San Ysabel, and but a small portion of the land can be cultivated without irrigation. It is subject to drought.

The Agua Caliente, one of the most remarkable and copious springs to be found in the country, is situated on one side of this ranch; but it seems to be a question whether the boundaries of the ranch properly include it. This spring has been in the possession of the Indians time out of mind, and the owners of the ranch are asking a new survey, which shall include all that the Indians now hold. As yet no attempt has been made to interfere with the Indian possession of this watering place, and I recommend that there be no confirmation of any survey that includes this spring within the boundaries of the ranch. The Agua Caliente is located on unsurveyed public land, and it should be reserved for the use of the Indians. Not more than a section of land need be included in such a reserve. The Indians will not give up the possession of this spring without a protest, and any attempt on the part of settlers to dispossess them would make trouble. From an examination of the records in the surveyor-general's office at San Francisco, I am led to apprehend that there are some legal questions to be settled before a good title can be established to this ranch.

SANTA ROSA RANCH.

This ranch, situated in the northern part of San Diego County, contains eleven leagues, or upwards of 47,000 acres of land. Much of the

land is mountainous and barren; there are some tracts of good tillable land, and considerable pasturage, and timber upon it, but water is scarce, and the Indians could not be collected in any considerable numbers. It is offered for sale at $150,000, currency, but there is no offer to lease.

SAN JACINTO NUEVO.

This tract, containing 47,225 acres, is offered for lease and sale by F. P. Foster. It is situated on the borders of San Diego and San Bernardino Counties. One hundred and forty thousand dollars is the price put upon the land, and $5,000 yearly rent is asked. This is known as a dry ranch. It is not suitable for the Indians; they could not subsist upon it.

SANTA MARGARITA.

This ranch, containing about 100,000 acres of land, situated on the coast, in San Diego County, midway between Los Angeles and San Diego City, is unsurpassed by any in Southern California for grazing purposes. Twenty-five thousand acres in the northern part of the ranch is offered for the sum of $150,000, gold coin, or for rent at $5,000 per annum, for one or two years.

Within the tract offered for lease or sale there is not much land adapted to cultivation. It is mostly good pasture-land, but it is not suitable for the Indians, and but few could be induced to resort to it and make permanent homes there.

RINCON DEL DIABLO.

This ranch, containing 12,973.77 acres of land, situated in San Diego County, is well adapted to grazing. It is located near San Pasqual Valley. There is not sufficient water for irrigation. The land is good quality. There are comfortable buildings upon it. The timber is scarce. There are no public lands near it. It is offered for a rental of $6,000 per annum, or for sale at $6 per acre, gold.

I forward herewith the written offers of the above-described tracts of land. I know of no other ranches in all Southern California, suitable for Indian use, that can be leased or purchased on reasonable terms.

The Pauma ranch, containing about four leagues of land, would answer admirably well, but it is the property of the Catholic Bishop Amat and his nephew, and they refuse to offer it to the Government on any terms. The titles to all these ranches are derived from old Spanish or Mexican grants that have been confirmed under the laws of the United States and patented.

SAN YSABEL.

All things considered, the San Ysabel ranch is best adapted to the use of the Indians. It contains a large amount of tillable land and abundant timber. Water is plentiful, and good crops are raised without irrigation. The general elevation of San Ysabel is about 3,000 feet above the sea, which renders the climate salubrious. There are several commodious buildings at the headquarters of the ranch, and about 400 acres under fence. This ranch is inclosed by mountains heavily timbered, including a large area of public land that could be added. Several hundred Indians now reside upon this tract of land, and it is a favorite resort for them all.

The owners, who are men of character and friendly to the Indians, say that the time has now come when a due regard for their own interest would require them to oust the Indians, but this would be a hardship, and they therefore offer to lease or sell to the Government at a reasonable price. As compared with the prices at which similar lands are

offered in Southern California, I consider the San Ysabel as the lowest and best of the propositions herewith submitted.

Regarding the terms upon which it was proposed to lease this ranch to the Government for the use of the Indians as just and reasonable, I did not hesitate to enter into an agreement with the owners; which agreement is herewith submitted and recommended to your approval.

The owners of San Ysabel understand that the lease which they tender remains inoperative until approved by the Department.

I submit with this report a map prepared by M. G. Wheeler, the county surveyor of San Diego County, which shows the ranches of Southern California, and also the locations occupied by Indians.

The Indians are liable at any time to be dispossessed of their present homes by the owners of the land, and to be cast out as the Temeculas have been.

If anything is ever to be done by the Government to rescue the Mission Indians of Southern California from their present deplorable state of homeless destitution, it cannot be done too soon; the object can now be attained at small cost; in another year it may become impracticable by an increased demand for land, in a country about to be penetrated by railroads. To remove these Indians to the Indian Territory would cost more than to settle them near their present homes. They are accustomed to work; give them land and they will support themselves. In many localities where they are now trespassers they have tilled the land for generations. The land-owners may eject them any day; many have been thus ejected, and now implore the Government for aid.

There is no body of Indians within the limits of the United States that have received so little aid from the Government as the Mission Indians of California. There is no body of Indians that has occasioned so little trouble. No Indians anywhere have endured wrong and outrage with more patience than these Indians; there is nowhere to be found a body of Indians that have been more useful than these in developing the country, for their labor has been freely used by the settlers at a small cost, and their removal would be a detriment to the community on that coast. Finally, a body of Indians is nowhere to be found for whom a moderate expenditure would accomplish more good.

There has been no attempt to furnish an accurate enumeration of the Mission Indians of Southern California. I recommend that Agent Dryden be instructed to perform that duty. From my own observation, and the best information I have been able to obtain, I conclude that the number found in San Diego County cannot be less than 1,500, and may possibly reach 2,000; as many more reside in San Bernardino County, and along the borders of the desert; several bands are found in Los Angeles County. These are the remnants of once prosperous communities connected with the old Spanish missions.

The annexed extract from the report of special United States Commissioner Charles A. Wetmore, will give you a fair idea of these missions, and the work they accomplished among the Indians.

The map above referred to was left by me at San Francisco, with instructions to be forwarded by mail to the Indian-Office at Washington. It has not yet reached your Office, as I am informed, but I presume it will come to hand, and when received it should be attached to this report.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. VANDEVER,
United States Indian Inspector.

HON. COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C.

Extract from Mr. Wetmore's report.

On the 16th of July, 1769, more than a century ago, the first mission was established in Alta California, at Cosoy, as the Indians there called the present site of the city of San Diego. A few years later it was removed to a point five miles from the bay of San Diego and established permanently at Nipaquay, now only known as the Mission Valley. Twenty-one missions were established within the present limits of the State of California, and many others farther south, in Lower California.

The following is a list of those established in Lower California, with dates of foundation:

San Diego, July 16, 1769.
San Luis Rey de Francia, June 13, 1798.
San Juan Capistrano, November 1, 1776.
San Gabriel, September 8, 1771.
San Fernando Rey, September 8, 1797.
San Buenaventura, March 31, 1782.
Santa Barbara, December 4, 1782.
Santa Ynez, September 17, 1804.
La Purissima Concepcion, December 8, 1787.

These names are given with reference to relative geographical position going north from San Diego. None of the mission establishments were situated more than thirty miles from the Pacific coast. Most of them were in the principal and most fertile valleys near the ocean. The most northerly one was San Francisco de Solano, now Sonoma, near San Francisco, to the north of the bay.

The missionaries were performing a semi-religious, semi-political work, aided by the authority and power of Spain. They gradually assumed control of the entire coast. The Indians were, by degrees, brought under subjection, and gathered in towns in the vicinity of the missions, where they were instructed in a rude system of agriculture, and in a few of the arts necessary to the lowest grades of civilized life.

Vast areas of the most fertile and best grazing lands were informally dedicated to the use of the missions, and held as common property by the neophytes under the direction and trusteeship of the missionaries. It was the aim of the Spanish government to construct out of this system permanent churches or parishes, and ultimately to divide the common property in severalty among the neophyte Indians, as soon as sufficiently educated and civilized to constitute quiet and industrious self-supporting citizens. In this plan and in its weakness, as subsequently shown, we see foreshadowed our present reservation system. They had the advantage of a fixed policy on the part of the missionaries, and a fixed purpose, unaffected by a change in office of the missionaries in charge; but their reservations of land, which were the foundation of their prosperity and progress, were subject to change, "restoration to the public domain," and sale by the government, just as the reservations of to-day in the United States are the subject of executive order. It was true then, as it is undeniably now, that whenever a white desires to own anything, especially land which is in the possession of an Indian, if it is within the power of the Government to take away the possessions of the Indian and give them to the importunate white applicant, some pretext will be found to excuse the wrong which is almost invariably perpetrated. The weakness in the system then was in the failure of the missionaries to secure vested rights for the Indians, who exchanged for such rights as they did receive the occupation and use of the whole country. Indians then, as now, received limited possessions under subjection as an exchange for their wide hunting-grounds, with a promise of protection, instruction, and the benefits of civilization; but those rights were not secured to them in fee, and the result was, as is now too often the case, when their lands became valuable and coveted by whites, they were speedily made paupers and vagrants to accommodate the white brother whose laws had been promised for their protection and improvement.

The Indians have been forced by superior power to trade their patrimony and their liberties for civilized bubbles blown by the breath of political insincerity, trading by compulsion from bad to worse, until they have, as the Mission Indians in California, simply the right to beg. They beg bread of their white neighbors on whose lands they are trespassers, on the roads where they are vagrants, and in the jails which are their only asylums. They have begged in vain for legal rights. Their right of petition to Congress has been ignored.

MARCH 1, 1876.

SIR: My opinion of the Santa Ysabel ranch, in San Diego County, California, is that it is a first-grade ranch, and is pre-eminently fitted for an Indian reservation. It contains 17,712 acres, of which probably 6,000 acres is first-rate agricultural land—the balance being

grazing-hills, well timbered with oak and some pine. It is well watered by several fine streams and springs of pure water, sufficient to irrigate a considerable body of land. It is a favorite spot of the Indians, and for many years they have farmed a portion of the ranch. They have here quite a village, and a good church-building. Adjacent to Santa Ysabel is a large body of Government land—occupied in part by the Mesa Grande Indians—which will afford pasturage for a large band of stock.

Altogether, I consider Santa Ysabel to be the best ranch in San Diego County.

Very respectfully,

M. G. WHEELER,
County Surveyor of San Diego County, California.

General WM. VANDEVER,
United States Indian Inspector.

MISSION INDIAN AGENCY, *Los Angeles, Cal., March* 14, 1876.

SIR: It has been my intention for some time past to send you a statement of public lands in San Bernardino County to be set apart for the benefit of Mission Indians in said county, as has already been done for the Indians in San Diego County; but I have had difficulty in finding reliable data for such statement. But, through the assistance of Mr. Fred. G. Perrin, the recently-elected surveyor of San Bernardino County, I herewith send you a statement which will afford a reliable basis for an executive order setting apart lands for the Indians in said county, and I hope you will secure said order without delay, as squatters are rapidly coming in and dispossessing these Indians of these lands, which they have held and cultivated for generations; and without some such help or protection from the Government they will soon be left landless and homeless. I wish the Department could understand the obligation of the Government toward these deeply-wronged people.

All the lands already set apart in San Diego County, and all that can be secured in San Bernardino County, will not provide homes for *one fourth* of the four thousand of the landless Indians now scattered about all over these counties hunting a precarious subsistence as best they can. A large tract of land for a Government reservation must be secured for them. The appropriation of $150,000, recommended by the late Commissioner of Indian Affairs, should, by all means, be granted by the present Congress. Is there any hope of it being done?

Hoping that this executive order may be obtained without delay,

I remain, most respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. A. DRYDEN,
United States Indian Agent, Los Angeles, Cal.

Hon. COMMISSIONER INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION LIBRARIES
3 9088 01069 0964